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*In the name of Humanity,
Korash,
(Cyrus R. Teed.)*

A Gift To The People

By Hedwig Michel

Rise and fall, growth and decline are normal procedures in all departments of nature. From times immemorial the history of nations, of cultures, of families and individuals show the same curving line — rise and fall. With overlapping times there also is "before" and "after." Birth and death seem to be the beginning and the end. But are they? Only our human limitations prevent us from recognizing the scope of our being, the realm that is ours far beyond our life span.

Dr. Cyrus Read Teed, the Founder of the Koreshan Universology, translated his Christian name into the Biblical KORESH, to demonstrate how far back into the invisible past his roots go. He also realized the strength and extension of our being into distant future. "If I would throw everything I write or ever have written right here into the waste basket," he used to explain, "or if it would be burned or otherwise destroyed, so that no human eye ever would get to see it, its spiritual substance, nevertheless, would go out, carried by waves, electric waves that fill the air we breathe." The power of thought is unlimited.

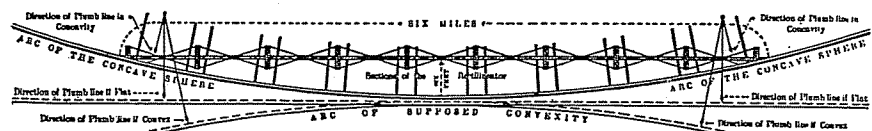
Cyrus Read Teed was born on October 18, 1839, near Trout Creek in a small settlement called Teedsville, in Tompkins township, Delaware County, N. Y. He was the second son of eight children of Jesse and Sarah Ann Tuffle Teed. His father, Jesse Teed, was a successful country doctor.

Cyrus R. Teed was descended through his mother from a John Read, who came to America from England in 1630 and settled in Rehoboth, Mass. At the age of eleven Cyrus quit school to help provide for the fast growing family. His parents were of the Baptist faith, and as Cyrus grew older his friends urged him to study for the ministry because of his natural oratorical ability. But Cyrus decided to become a physician and in 1859 commenced the study of medicine with his uncle, Dr. Samuel F. Teed, in Utica, N. Y.

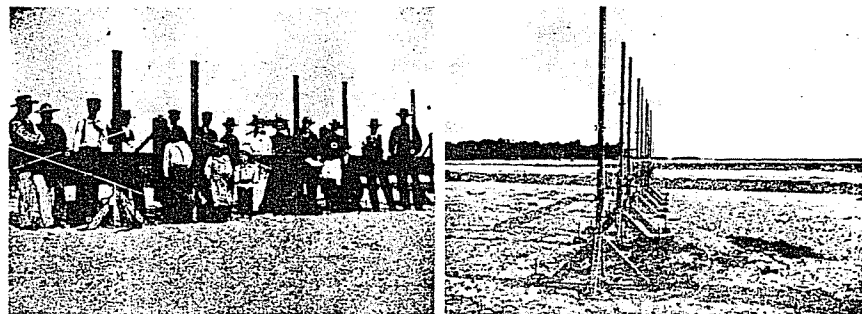
Being of a deeply religious, philanthropic and investigative turn of mind, Dr. Teed sought wider means of alleviating the ills of humanity than mere medical science could afford and so consecrated his life to that end. His intense research in the realm of metaphysics resulted in a spiritual awakening or divine "illumination," as he termed it, in the autumn of 1869. This "illumination" was the revelation of the mysteries of life and death, of the form and character of the universe, of the relation of man to God and man's ultimate destiny in God. It was the revelation of universal knowledge.

Koreshan Universology has reached people in distant countries. The Koreshan standard textbook, "The Cellular Cosmogony" may be found in libraries of many foreign lands, even where other English books are unknown.

The Koreshan system teaches that life is composed of cells, from the smallest, the microcosmic cell, to the macrocosmic cell, the universe, the earth. The sun is at the center and the sun, moon, planets and stars are all within the globe. The sun, having a light and a dark side, revolves in the center of the universe once in 24 hours and is an electro-magnetic battery. The earth is practically stationary, a concave sphere, with all life on its inner surface. Measured by the geodetic staff of the Koreshan Unity, the curvature of the earth was shown to be concave and not convex as the Copernican hypothesis assumes. This measurement was undertaken at Naples-on-the-Gulf in 1897, and the facts are explained in detail in "The Cellular Cosmogony."



View of the Air Line, Showing Use of the Rectilineator in Survey of Chord of Arc by the Koreshan Geodetic Staff at Naples, Fla.



When elected president of the National Association of Mental Science in Chicago in 1886, Koresh and his followers moved from New York, his native state, and established their communal life in Chicago.

A commonwealth, conforming to ancient Christian communal life, the followers, men and women with children, gave their worldly goods to the religious order and devoted their lives to their church. Performance of use, love and service to the neighbor and denial of monetary gains, were postulates.

The magnetic personality of the founder, his creative vision and wisdom attracted people from all walks of life and the Koreshan movement grew to more than 200 members during the years of the early history. Other American religious communities of the last century served them as a pattern, especially the Pennsylvania "Harmonites," known as "Old Economy," were their close friends. Plans to practical cooperation did not materialize because the Harmonites were at the point of extinction around 1890, while the Koreshans were the young and uprising organization. They had to expand and to establish the order of their religious, social, scientific system. They had to find a territory productive to their dream.

The last frontier state, Florida, at that time was the most promising. Koresh succeeded in the final establishment of the Koreshan Unity at Florida's west coast, in Estero on the Estero River. There an old German farmer, Gustav Damkohler, had homesteaded land since 1884. A student of the Bible and its translator, he presented "the Lord's servant" with his property and also joined with his only surviving son, Elbert, the religious organization.

Admiring today the lush, tropical vegetation of the botanical gardens where upon the arrival of the pioneers nothing but palmettos, pines, oaks and native Florida shrubs and trees possessed the land, visitors are spellbound. With vision, the Founder had platted the grounds, laid out the roads and trails, em-

ployed helpers to dig sunken gardens, put up hills to exhibit flowering tropicals. Through the government Introduction Bureau, the gardeners received seeds and plants which explorers and scientists had collected in tropical countries. To build a tropical paradise along the Estero River was part of their dream — though farming for food was of foremost need.

More than ten years were spent in moving from Chicago and constructing houses for the members to shelter and protect themselves against insect pests, weather hazards, scorching sun and chilling winds. No professional builders, neither contractors, also lacking today's technical advantages, these men and women used their hands, their heads. The devotion to their leader and his mission inspired these former urbanists to pioneer performances of great and lasting value.

The work steadily progressed. To the gardens a tropical nursery was added, also farming of vegetables began on the island, Mound Key in Estero Bay, cattle raising in Estero followed, a sawmill with housing of members on Estero Island helped the lumber business, and fishing and hunting provided food. A mechanical department with workshops for blacksmith, carpentry, plumbing, tool building, and a machine shop for repairs of machinery of any description helped the Koreshans as well as their neighbors to keep their work going, as also did shipbuilding and shipping of fruit for the growers in the vicinity.

Last, but not least, printing was among the main activities in the Estero Community. As in Chicago, the Koreshan Press, the Guiding Star Publishing House, continued publication of the religious magazine "The Flaming Sword." In the effort to bring culture and educational standards to Florida's south, the Founder initiated a secular weekly paper, "The American Eagle," with Allen H. Andrews the editor. Originally a political paper, it became in later years a Horticultural Review through weekly contributions by Florida's foremost plantsman, the late Henry Nehrling. Together with publications of the Cellular Cosmogony and diversified publications on Koreshan Universology, job work done in the printing department stimulated contacts with friends and neighbors. The magazines today are invaluable sources of information on the growth and history of southern Florida through their columns on activities, facts and data on life as it developed in Lee County since the Koreshans settled in Estero in 1894.

Among Koreshan buildings, the Art Hall on the highway retains prominence. Church services and lectures, as in the past, give this quaint structure its importance. Historical relics such as the measuring instruments, one section of the original rectilineator, the telescope, the globe "we live inside," demonstration charts help to explain Koreshan Universology. Old furniture, retired mus-

ical instruments point back into the past where the Koreshan Orchestra and the Koreshan Band were appreciated entertainers and were said to be the finest musical organization south of Tampa. Some of their audiences still living cherish the memories of these rare evenings of music, culture, art, enjoyed at the Koreshan Art Hall, where the walls are covered with paintings of the renowned artist, Douglas Arthur Teed, the only son of the Founder. His training in European art centers is an admired feature in his works.

Varied sports were included in the Koreshans entertainments: boating, swimming, tennis matches and a baseball team improved the health and kept up good spirits during the darkest years of pioneer hardships, during which the drama was an important activity.

The General Store and the Estero River Trailer Park both on the highway are still existing bulwarks of Koreshan principles to serve the neighbor in the performance of use as a religion.

At the passing of the Founder December 22, 1908, the Koreshan Unity was at the height of expansion and for years the work carried through, its momentum still being strong.

But as the celibate order of the church leaders never had been complemented by the cooperative families, as planned by the Founder, old age reduced the activities of the first settlers' colony, besides nature's ravages, freezes and droughts, fires and floods, which increased problems of future existence. When in 1947, individual greed preyed on the welfare of the commonwealth, the tragedy of dissolution seemed imminent to the overaged management.

But destiny charted the further course of the Koreshan movement. Experienced administrators accepted the responsibility to carry the Founder's vision to triumph.

After it was evident that young people would not devote their lives and their belongings to the cause of humanity, to willingly follow as church leaders and that the only people interested to join were those over-aged looking for a place of rest to end their days, the time to reorganize the corporation had come. The corporation had been created by Koresh in 1903 under the laws of the State of New Jersey.

The "College of Life," as the Founder liked to name his work, could not be replaced by an old-peoples' home.

"You are building for future generations," Koresh had impressed his followers. "Let the work be so well accomplished as to preclude the possibility of any future regret for any unfaithfulness in its construction."

On what basis could we pursue the Founder's intentions?

The corporation's records show: "The Five Hundred and Eighty-fourth Regular Monthly Meeting of the Board of Directors of The Koreshan Unity, Inc., was held this day, Friday, February 1, 1952 at Estero, Florida. The president, L. W. Bubbett, in the chair called the meeting to order. The following directors responded to roll call: L. W. Bubbett, C. J. Rahn, Hedwig Michel, Anne W. Lewis . . . Motion was made by Hedwig Michel, seconded by L. W. Bubbett and unanimously carried, that the president be empowered to look into the matter of the future preservation of the Koreshan Unity, Inc., that he be empowered to contact authorities for possible perpetuation of the home ground as an historical and botanical monument, perhaps as a Memorial Park of the State of Florida."

In 1956 Governor LeRoy Collins was contacted. He outlined necessary steps to be taken and concluded his letter of November 7, 1956:

"A State Park is needed in Lee County and this seems to be an excellent opportunity for its establishment."

Though moving in the right direction, for unknown reasons, the establishment of the state park at that time did not materialize. Conferences, discussions with leaders of philanthropic organizations, with officers of the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc., with those of the Florida Audubon Society preceded the final solution for the perpetuation of this complex work.

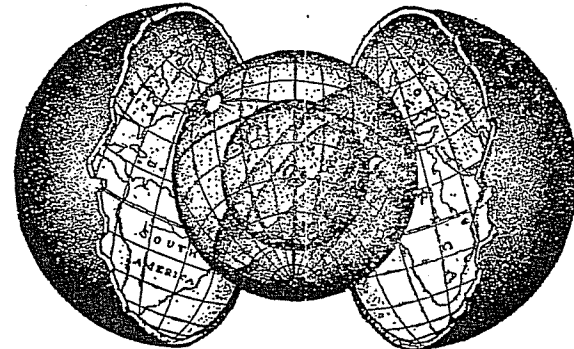
In January 1961, after the initiation of the Florida Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, a non-profit membership corporation dedicated to the preservation of natural areas for present and future generations, the elected president, Melvin Finn of Miami, looked into the Koreshan Unity's problems and restored contacts with the Florida Board of Parks and Historic Memorials, a state agency. Constructive cooperation with the State Board of Parks' member of District V, John D. Pennekamp, Miami, and all other members of this Board, led — in less than six months — to the transfer of landholdings of the first settlers in Estero to perpetuate the history of their work, as a Koreshan State Park.

Invaluable assistance in preparing this transfer was given the Board of Directors of the Koreshan Unity by Dr. John W. Oliver, instructor in history at Rollins College in Winter Park. Dr. Oliver, commissioner of the State of Pennsyl-

vania for the legacy of "Old Economy," the Koreshans' former friends in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, made available the archives and legal papers of the "Harm-onites," showing the transfer of their pioneer work to the State of Pennsylvania. Dr. Oliver's experience furthered the decisions the Koreshan Board had to reach. The results the related organization showed after more than sixty years of Commonwealth administration appeared most encouraging, a pattern to go by. "A living monument of great stature," was the impression the president of the Koreshan Unity gained at a visit to "Old Economy" in Ambridge. "The pioneer work of settlers long since gone is restored and greatly appreciated by the people of Pennsylvania and visitors of this state," was the stimulating effect of this trip. "This is exactly the future development of the Koreshan work under the administration of the Florida State Board of Parks and Historic Memorials. The Koreshan ideals will be perpetuated, the past history maintained and restored," Dr. Oliver predicts.

The Koreshan Unity's legal advisor, Parker Holt of Fort Myers, together with the State Board of Parks' chairman, John Fite Robertson of Sarasota, arranged for the deed of 130 acres of the homeland on Highway 41 in Estero, of 70 acres north and south at the mouth of the Estero River, of about 100 acres of landholdings at Mound Key in Estero Bay, which deed was recorded in the Fort Myers Courthouse on November 24, 1961.

At the Board Meeting in West Palm Beach on December 2, 1961, Miss Hedwig Michel of Estero, president of The Koreshan Unity, Inc., expressed the gratitude of the Board of Directors and its membership, for the achievement of transferring Koreshan holdings to the State Board of Parks and Historic Memorials. As token of confidence in future cooperation, she handed Dr. James T. Cook, then Chairman of the Florida State Board of Parks and Historic Memorials, the key to the Koreshan Art Hall where the Cellular Cosmogony is demonstrated by this hollow globe.



"the world we live in."

Governor Farris Bryant sent the following letter on December 15, 1961:

Miss Hedwig Michel, President
Koreshan Unity, Inc.
Estero, Florida

Dear Miss Michel:

Dr. James E. Cook, Chairman, Florida Board of Parks and Historic Memorials has advised me of the donation of property which the Koreshan Unity, Inc. has recently made to the State of Florida for park, historical and archeological purposes. The new State Park, which I understand will be named Koreshan State Park, will be a most valuable addition to our Florida State Park System. The historical presentation of Florida's pioneers in this Utopian community, the archeological attraction and preservation of Mound Key, and the beauties of the watercourse along the Estero River will annually attract many thousands of Floridians and out-of-state visitors, to this most unusual and diversified Florida State Park.

I am certain that the Koreshan State Park will be operated by the Florida Board of Parks and Historic Memorials in a very dignified manner, whereby you and your associates will always be proud of your foresightedness in contributing to the conservation of Florida's assets.

I take this opportunity to personally thank the Koreshan Unity, Inc. for this most generous donation of land and property to the State of Florida, and it is my hope that the Koreshan Unity, Inc. will in the future assist in the future expansion of Koreshan State Park.

Sincerely yours,

FARRIS BRYANT

Governor

This rare document in the history of the Koreshan Unity guarantees the pioneers altruistic work, their steadfast love of humanity, anchored in the three-way trust of philanthropy: where the giver trusts the integrity and purpose of the receiver, the receiver in turn trusts the giver's obligation to respect his independence, and lastly, the public trusts that this transaction is motivated solely by the desire to serve the common welfare.

"No better solution could be found for this pioneer settlement," was the unanimous reaction of the people of Florida who now own the Koreshan State Park.